

Fact Sheet: Stop and Frisk's Effect on Crime in New York City

By James Cullen and Ames Grawert

This fact sheet provides data on the effect of “stop-and-frisk” on crime in New York City, updating an earlier [Brennan Center analysis](#).¹

Stop-and-frisk was a police practice under which officers stopped and searched citizens, allegedly without the reasonable suspicion required for these interventions.

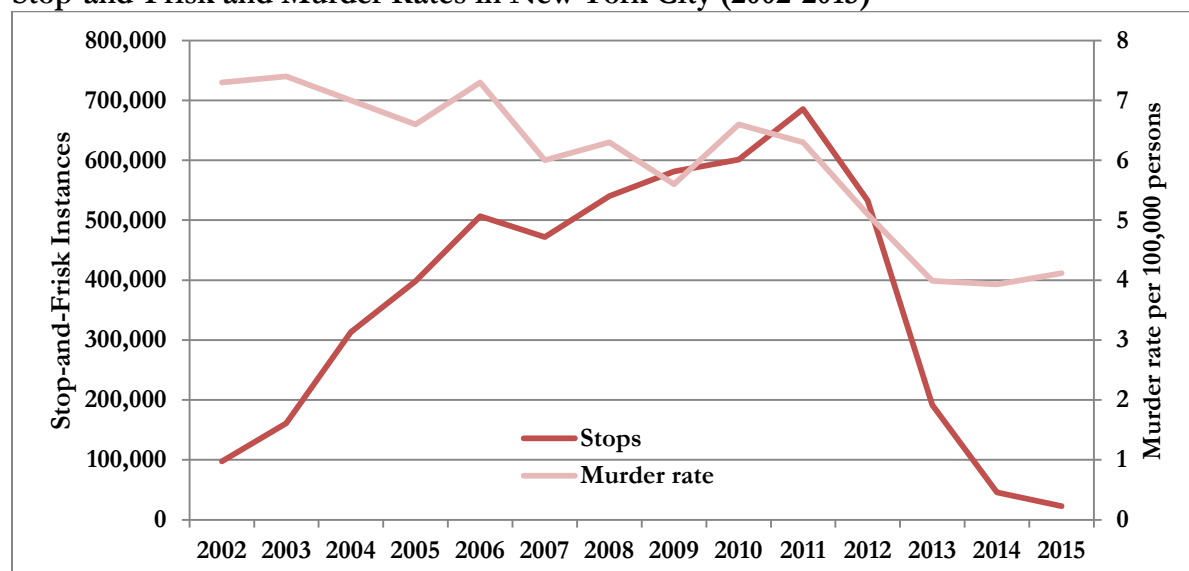
Concerns about the program first arose [under Mayor Rudy Giuliani](#), during William J. Bratton's first tenure as police commissioner.² After growing slowly in the early 2000s, stop-and-frisk began to rapidly increase in 2006, when there were 500,000 stops citywide. By 2011 the number peaked at 685,000. It then began to fall, first to 533,000 stops in 2012.

Stop-and-frisk became a central issue in the 2013 city mayoral race because of a concern that the program unconstitutionally targeted communities of color. The program's supporters disputed this, insisting that stop-and-frisk was essential for fighting crime in such a huge city.

In August 2013, federal district court judge [Shira Scheindlin found](#) that stop-and-frisk was unconstitutional.³ The stop-and-frisk era formally drew to a close in January 2014, when newly-elected Mayor Bill de Blasio settled the litigation and ended the program.

Given this large-scale effort, one might expect crime generally, and murder specifically, to increase as stops tapered off between 2012 and 2014. Instead, as shown below, the murder rate fell while the number of stops declined. In fact, the biggest fall occurred precisely when the number of stops also fell by a large amount — in 2013.

Stop-and-Frisk and Murder Rates in New York City (2002-2015)



Source: NYCLU Stop-and-Frisk data & FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

As the graph below shows, property and violent crime also fell, both while the number of stops increased *and* fell. Crime continued to decline as the program wound to its 2014 close.

Stop-and-Frisk and Crime Rates in New York City (2002-2015)



Source: NYCLU Stop-and-Frisk data & FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

Statistically, no relationship between stop-and-frisk and crime seems apparent. New York remains safer than it was 5, 10, or 25 years ago. As [analysis by the Brennan Center](#) has shown, a part of this was the introduction of CompStat, which allowed police to consult data when making decisions about where and how to respond to crime.⁴

Police and good policing techniques are very important in fighting crime. But to know what works and what doesn't, we need to listen to the data.

Endnotes

¹ See James Cullen, *Ending New York's Stop-and-Frisk Did Not Increase Crime*, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUSTICE (Apr. 11, 2016), <https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/ending-new-yorks-stop-and-frisk-did-not-increase-crime>. Crime data for the previous Brennan Center analysis of stop-and-frisk was drawn from NYPD CompStat reports. Crime data for this analysis was drawn from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. As a result, graphs may appear to differ.

² See *Floyd v. City of New York*, 959 F. Supp.2d 540, 590-91 (S.D.N.Y. 1993) (noting that the N.Y.P.D. knew about concerns around stop-and-frisk as early as 1999); ELIOT SPITZER, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, THE NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT'S STOP AND FRISK PRACTICES 53-55 (1999), http://www.oag.state.ny.us/sites/default/files/pdfs/bureaus/civil_rights/stp_frsk.pdf (tracing the origin of stop-and-frisk to policies set by Commissioner Bratton as early as 1994).

³ *Floyd*, 959 F. Supp.2d at 562.

⁴ See LAUREN BROOKE-EISEN ET AL., BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUSTICE, WHAT CAUSED THE CRIME DECLINE (2015), <https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/what-caused-crime-decline>.